

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This plan is intended to help protect and preserve human health, environmental quality, and natural resources by guiding solid and moderate risk waste efforts and decisions in Clark County between 2000 and 2005, and influencing them further into the future. The Plan provides some details of the solid waste related activities that will be undertaken by local government within the short five-year horizon, and it also discusses the general types of activities necessary if solid waste generated within the county is to be managed in a safe and economical manner over the long twenty-year planning horizon.

The Plan's chapters have an introductory section that frames the topic, a section describing existing conditions and issues, a listing of possible alternatives and finally, the recommendation actions and policies.

The Plan contains a five-year implementation schedule that describes what is to be accomplished between 2000 and 2005. This schedule is a summary listing of all the recommendations of the Plan. There also an analysis of the needs of the solid waste disposal system and a cost analysis.

Throughout this Plan the term system is used to denote the Clark County Solid Waste Management System. The system refers to a number of integrated solid waste management facilities and activities undertaken by the Clark County Public Works Department, Solid Waste Program and financed by a self supporting enterprise fund. The facilities and their operations are contracted and activities undertaken in order to fulfill the responsibilities delegated to Clark County under Washington law, the mutual responsibilities assumed by the County and its six cities and one town under the terms of their interlocal agreements, and the responsibilities arising from this Plan.

Public Review

The staff has worked on various drafts since 1998. A Public Review Draft was released in 1998. It was presented at a series of public meetings, presentations to city councils and staffs and in the Clark County Solid Waste Advisory Commission (SWAC) meetings. In addition to public comments, the SWAC was heavily involved in revising the draft. Several multi-stakeholder teams were formed to deal with specific issues and made recommendations to the SWAC. The Southwest Washington Health District and the City of Vancouver were steady participants throughout the entire process. The SWAC completed its final review and made a recommendation for adoption of the Plan at the end of 2000. The Department of Ecology and the Washington State Utilities Commission has also reviewed the draft and issued their comments.

This Preliminary Draft Plan will be adopted by the County, cities and the town of Yacolt. After adoption, the Plan must be approved by the Department of Ecology.

Background

Governmental solid waste management has changed considerably in the last decade. Such changes demand flexibility on the part of this Plan and the system, particularly in relation to:

- funding—the system must be concerned with long-term financial stability of its solid waste management system given that the current regulatory and legislative climate do not ensure the security of past systems;
- increased regional and interagency cooperation—solutions to solid waste related problems are often more effective, and sometimes only effective, if implemented on a regional basis, multi-county basis, or multi-agency basis;
- recognition of the role of the private sector—Clark County’s system has successfully utilized contracts and agreements with the private sector to carry out certain system functions and activities, while maintaining functions and activities which are uniquely governmental responsibilities;
- regulatory environment—the system and programs must be designed and managed with consideration of how the economic system will respond, how private industry will react within the changing regulatory climate, and, within the bounds of recent and ongoing legislative changes;
- functions and organizational structure of the system—these have changed over time, and are likely to continue to do so in the future.

System waste management activities are organized around two Plans: the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP), and the Moderate Risk Waste Management Plan (MRW Plan). The MRW Plan covers household hazardous waste as well as hazardous waste generated in small quantities by businesses. This comprehensive Plan is intended to consolidate those two into one planning document.

Values and Goals

The purpose of solid waste management activities in Clark County is to protect and preserve human health, environmental quality and natural resources through efficient, cost-effective programs and services.

This document outlines Clark County’s plans to follow the legislature’s priorities for solid waste handling and recovery goals, in the following order:

- A. waste reduction;
- B. recycling, with source separation of recyclable materials as the preferred method;
- C. energy recovery, incineration and landfilling of separated wastes;
- D. energy recovery, incineration and landfilling of mixed wastes.

Programs

The solid waste programs and projects are grouped into four major categories:

- Public Education and Awareness
- Business & Institutional Activities
- Regional Coordination and Planning
- Disposal & Diversion System Coordination

The Implementation Schedule is a summary of the recommendations for the programs and projects. For each item, the Chapter and Recommendation numbers are shown, for reference to further explanation. Most of the Implementation Actions in this update of the Solid Waste Management Plan are multi-year actions, and they are listed for each year. The actions are generally arranged so that the higher priority actions are shown before the lower priority actions, although there is no strict delineation. Priorities will continue to be reviewed each year, and annual priority lists developed. At the end of each year's list is a section for "Targets of Opportunity." These are actions which will be addressed if certain circumstances occur to make them appropriate.

Proposed Plan

The intent of the Plan is to establish the foundation for the proper management of solid and moderate risk wastes in Clark County, both now and in the future. The Plan update incorporates the following guiding or philosophical principles:

- Balance among public convenience, public expenses, public health and the environment;
- Flexibility to anticipate future changes and needs;
- Commitment to waste reduction and recycling;
- Increased local control of solid waste management;
- Integrity of waste stream measurement and monitoring;
- Encouragement of cooperative and coordinated efforts among government agencies, citizens and the private sector for managing solid wastes.

The updated Plan provides decision-makers with three important tools:

- Guidelines for the development of programs, policies and operating plans;
- Background information to support facility permitting decisions by the Southwest Washington Health District (SWWHD) and other local government agencies;
- The technical support and justification for grant applications, capital project fund requests and future programs.

The Plan also provides the general public with information about solid waste management in Clark County.

Comparison to the Existing Plan

There are several notable differences between the existing and proposed Plan.

- The most significant change from the existing Plan is the integration of the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and the Moderate Risk Waste Management Plan (MRW Plan) into one planning document.
- Another notable change is the new focus on the diversion and recovery of organics. Organic processing is a high priority in the Portland Metro region and Clark County should be able to take advantage of a regional processing system. Diverting edible foods from the waste to food banks is another effort that is being boosted by the neighboring region's activities.
- Expand the system to include an east county transfer station for transportation and cost efficiencies.
- A position against local (in-county) landfills for construction and demolition wastes. Development of commercial and construction/demolition recycling and recovery programs.
- A focus on integrating solid waste outreach and education messages to include other environmental issues, such as water quality, that are affected by solid waste.
- A heightened emphasis on partnerships, coordination and collaboration for mutual benefits. Benefits include reduced costs, shared responsibilities, information and data exchange, more effective programs, better enforcement, etc. The listing of opportunities and benefits is varied and most can be found in the Administration chapter.

- Increased voice in the state and local government to encourage passage of specific types waste legislation and policies. See Waste Prevention Chapter.
- Enhance local solid waste enforcement to meet the County's needs and meet the challenge of the changing regulatory climate. Increased information exchange between agencies, heightened public awareness, new or amended codes, and a County enforcement position are all recommendations which expand beyond the existing Plan. See the Enforcement Chapter.
- The recommendations for funding the solid waste system are, in large part, the status quo. There are two recommendations that address MRW program and compliance activity funding. See Funding & Finance Chapter.